The Anti-Imperialism of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

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https://blanquist.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-anti-imperialism-of-star-trek-deep.html

Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* is one of science fiction's most successful franchises with four spin-offs and twelve movies which has lasted nearly fifty years. For leftists, Star Trek is also one of the few places in mainstream television and culture where explicitly positive utopian communist themes can be found. However, for many fans of the franchise, the third spin-off *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (henceforth *DS9*) is seen as a betrayal of Roddenberry's vision of an optimistic future with a much darker and jaded universe. For instance, in DS9 the “benevolent” Federation possesses a secret intelligence organization, manipulating alien powers, assassination, and even planning genocide of alien species. The Federation is also involved in a long bloody war with a powerful empire called the Dominion. Despite all this, *DS9* is also marked by its large cast of complex multilayered characters. The show deals thoughtfully and in a nuanced manner with a number of social and political themes. Ultimately, DS9 gives an unromanticized view of

inter-imperialist rivalry, candidly discusses tough choices about how to defend a utopian communist society, and questions of national liberation and revolution.

I. Deep Space Nine: At the Edge of the Frontier[1]

The Dominion Fleet invading

While Star Trek is generally noted for its themes of exploration and encountered new life and civilizations across the galaxy, DS9 is a marked departure from this formula. Rather, the show is largely set on an abandoned Cardassian space station *Terrok Nor*, renamed *Deep Space Nine* (another difference since all the other Star Trek shows are primarily set on starships) with a crew of Star Fleet officers who are working to help a war-torn Bajor rebuild and ultimately enter the Federation. The space station is also strategically located next to a stable wormhole which provides safe passage to the distant Gamma Quadrant, making the space station a center of commerce, travel and later, a military outpost. The powerful and deadly Dominion, who rule much of the Gamma Quadrant cause massive manipulation, maneuvers and struggle among the various powers.

Although the series does have some aspects of exploration and travel, it is mainly set within the known Star Trek Universe dealing largely with the problems of administration, bureaucracy and keeping things going in the Federation. Indeed, the universe of DS9 seems very close to what Lenin would describe as inter-imperialist rivalry between a number of great powers as they seek hegemony, spheres of influence, resources and form shifting alliances.[2] Occasionally there is a periodic re-division of territories through warfare. The following quotation by Lenin seems to sum up the constant tension between the various imperial alien powers of DS9:

> ***"No matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracingallthe imperialist powers, areinevitablynothing more than a "truce" in periods between wars. Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle out ofone and the samebasis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics."***[3]

DS9 shows us a half-dozen great powers involved in inter-imperialist rivalry, along with their internal contradictions, and it also doesn't romanticize any of the powers even if they are considered "good guys."

II. The Great Powers

The imperial rivalry for power, national pride and resources motivate the alien empires of DS9, such as the Cardassians, Klingons, Romulans, Ferengi and the Dominion in their relations with each other and the Federation (which will be considered separately). For instance, one of

the primary antagonists during the early seasons of DS9 are the Cardassians, a society which could easily be described as totalitarian with service to the state as the highest goal (*The Maquis part two*), an ever vigilant and ruthless secret police force known as the Obsidian Order (*The Wire*), a jury system where the accused is always guilty (*Tribunal*).

The complex politics of the Cardassian Empire is an ever present theme within the show. At the beginning of the series, the long-lasting Cardassian occupation of Bajor ended following shifts within the government. However, elements of the Cardassian military, notably the charismatic and brutal Gul Dukat opposed the withdrawal from Bajor (*Emissary*) to the point of planning a military coup and always dreamed of returning to control of the planet (*Cardassians* and *Call to Arms*). The resultant legacy of the Cardassian occupation of Bajor (discussed at greater length below) on both Cardassia and the Bajorans is a recurrent series motif.

Klingons Attack DS9

Until season five, the Cardassians are involved in a cold peace with the Federation, seeking to negotiate new borders (*The Maquis parts one and two*) and deal with a growing internal dissident movement (*Profit and Loss* and *Second Skin*). Ultimately, the destruction of the

Cardassian Obsidian Order while fighting the Dominion allows for a civilian uprising to occur and overthrow the rule of the Central Command and install a democratic government (*Die is Cast* and *Way of the Warrior*). However, the new Cardassian government is not given a moment's respite, but it is believed by the Klingon Empire that the change in government was orchestrated by shape-shifters from another rival power, the Dominion.

The Klingons mass a major invasion force and take over Cardassia. While the Federation sees this as a blatant act of aggression, the Klingons do not justify their actions of simply a desire for power. Rather, they argue that the invasion is meant to protect the Alpha Quadrant of the galaxy from Dominion invasion. Klingon General Martok says, “Are you saying the Federation will sit back and do nothing while Klingon soldiers give their lives to protect the Alpha Quadrant?” (*Way of the Warrior*)

The Federation abrogates its treaty with the Klingons by warning the Cardassians about the invasion and rescuing the leaders of the Cardassian government. Sisko and his crew discover that they aren't shape-shifters, but the Martok insists that it doesn't matter. This leads to a bloody battle at Deep Space Nine between the well-armed Federation station and the Klingon fleet. However, before all-out war escalates, Sisko manages to convince the Klingons to stand down because it will only leave them all open to Dominion attack. The exchange between Sisko, Worf, Martok and Klingon Chancellor is revealing about how much inter-imperialist rivalry shapes the motives of the varying powers:

> WORF: The Empire is not strong enough to fight the Federation and the Cardassians. End this now, Gowron, before you lead the Empire to its worst defeat in history.

MARTOK: We will not surrender!

SISKO: This is exactly what the Founders want. Klingon against Cardassian, Federation against Klingon. The more we fight each other, the weaker we'll get, and the less chance we have against the Dominion.

WORF: Consider what you do here, Gowron. Kahless himself said, destroying an Empire to win a war is no victory.

GOWRON: And ending a battle to save an Empire is no defeat.

MARTOK: We can still win!

SISKO: Not before those starships get here. Now, what do I tell them? To stand down or to come in firing?

GOWRON: It is we who shall stand down.

…

GOWRON: Enough. Cease fire. Order our ships in Cardassian territory to halt their advance. I do not intend to hand victory to the Dominion. (*Way of the Warrior*)

Martok and Gowron

Even though the Klingons stopped from going to an outright war with the Federation, they fortified several key Cardassian planets. Throughout season four, there was a tense stand-off between the Federation and the Klingons as the latter sought to blockade the Bajoran sector (*Sons of Mogh*), blame a civilian massacre on Star Fleet officers (*Rules of Engagement*) and continues to launch deadly raids in Cardassian space (*Return to Grace*). Ultimately, ancient Klingon claims to the planet Archanis lead to a short-lived war with the Federation. It is revealed at the end of Season four, that Gowron, the leader of the Klingon Empire is a shape shifter, who is presumably manipulating the Klingon Empire into war to weaken both powers (*Broken Link*). This leads Starfleet to send a covert team to expose the Changeling and hopefully end the war. Yet as it turned out, the real infiltrator was actually Martok and if the Federation killed Gowron (prevented by Odo), this would have led to the Martok Changeling taking power and continuing the war until both powers were completely destroyed.

Although the Klingons seemingly prize honor and victory in war above everything, the ever-present Dominion threat causes negotiations to be opened with the Federation:

> GOWRON: True, but if your Klingon blood wasn't so thin you'd know that once battle has begun, there can be no turning back. You want the war to end, then the Federation must allow us to annex Archanis and the other worlds we've seized.
>
> SISKO: I wouldn't count on it. But if the fighting stops and the negotiations begin
>
> GOWRON: Ah, yes. Talk.
>
> ODO: That's right. Talk. The last thing the Dominion wants. (*Apocalypse Rising*)

Although there remains a few more skirmishes with the Federation (*Nor the Battle to the Strong*), once the Dominion moves into the Alpha Quadrant, the Federation and the Klingons renew their military alliance and remain united throughout the long war (*By Inferno's Light*).

This statement of Martok reveals the seemingly high-minded ideals of the Klingon Empire – placing honor and the greater good above all. Despite their rhetoric, the Klingons are an incredibly corrupt society where crimes are covered up, lives are wasted in personal feuds (*Tacking Into the Wind*), and great Houses destroy each other using dishonorable methods over ancient feuds (*House of Quark)*. Indeed, a person's bloodline is deemed more worthwhile than their willingness to serve the Empire. This is precisely how Kor justifies denying granting Martok a chance to be an officer:

> WORF: He says that you struck his name from an officers list because his family comes from the Ketha lowlands.
>
> KOR: Did I? I don't recall. Of course, there were so many officer lists. I suppose it's possible.
>
> WORF: It is an unworthy reason to bar a man from serving the Empire.
>
> KOR: Worf, you've been living among this democratic rabble for too long. I know your bloodline. We both come from noble Houses. Among our people that still counts for something. If Martok is a true Klingon, he should appreciate that. (*Once More Unto the Breach*)

During the Dominion War, Gowron is jeopardizing the whole front line by launching foolhardy offensives in order discredit the popular Martok. When discussing the situation with Worf and how to deal with it, Ezri Dax aptly summarizes the inner rot inside the Klingon Empire:

> EZRI: I think that the situation with Gowron is a symptom of a bigger problem. The Klingon Empire is dying. And I think it deserves to die....I see a society that is in deep denial about itself. We're talking about a warrior culture that prides itself on maintaining centuries old traditions of honour and integrity, but in reality it's willing to accept corruption at the highest levels.
>
> WORF: You are overstating your case.
>
> EZRI: Am I? Who was the last leader of the High Council that you respected? Has there even been one? And how many times have you had to cover up the crimes of Klingon leaders because you were told it was for the good of the Empire? I know this sounds harsh, but the truth is, you have been willing to accept a government that you know is corrupt. Gowron's just the latest example. Worf, you are the most honourable and decent man I've ever met, and if you're willing to tolerate men like Gowron, then what hope is there for the Empire? (*Tacking Into the Wind*)

Ultimately, Worf ends up challenging Gowron to honorable combat and kills him. By right and tradition, he should ascend to leadership of the Empire, but give the position to Martok. While Worf places great hopes on Martok's leadership, it remains an open question if one man

can fundamentally change a corrupt Empire which has been militarily devastated in a long war. (*Inter Arma Enim Silent Leges)*

Romulans

One long term enemy of the Klingons and the Federation is the Romulan Star Empire, another great power in the Alpha Quadrant. While the Klingons are noted for their use of brute force and the Federation for diplomacy to advance their interests, the Romulans primarily use subterfuge, manipulation and seek to provoke their opponents to act before responding (although as we shall see, the Federation are willing to use similar methods in dealing with the Romulans). The Romulans are willing to work with other powers, including the Federation to advance their interests. When the Dominion threat first appears, the Romulans loan them a cloaking device to use on the USS Defiant in exchange for all Federation intelligence on the new threat (*The Search* and the *Visionary*).

Yet the Romulans are also quite ruthless when the situation calls for it. When debriefing Starfleet on their intelligence in regards to the Dominion, the Romulan delegation also plans to

destroy the station and the wormhole to eliminate that threat. Along with their delegation to Deep Space Nine, the Romulans send a cloaked ship to destroy the station:

> SISKO: I know you have a cloaked warbird orbiting the station, and I know you're planning an attack. At first, I couldn't understand why, and then I remembered what you said about the Dominion. How they were the greatest threat to the Alpha Quadrant in the last century. If you really believed that, then the only way you could ever be truly safe from the Dominion would be to collapse the wormhole.
>
> KIRA: But you knew we wouldn't just sit by and watch while you did it, so you had to destroy the station too. That way, there'd be no witnesses.
>
> ODO: Everyone would assume that Deep Space Nine was destroyed by what appeared to be the accidental collapse of the wormhole.(*The Visionary*)

While the Romulan effort is thwarted, they remain determined to deal a crippling blow to the Dominion. And it is here that a fraction of the Romulan ruling class, notably around their intelligence service, the Tal Shiar allies with the Cardassian secret police, the Obsidian Order in a joint operation to destroy the Founders of the Dominion (*The Defiant*, *Improbable Cause*, *The Die is Cast*). Ultimately the attack is foiled by a Dominion infiltrator and the fleets are wiped out, although the survivors are taken prisoner. The destruction of the two fleets does not seem to affect the internal structure of the Romulan Empire, but it opens the way to the collapse of the once-powerful Cardassian Central Command. The temporary alliance of the class fractions within the Romulan and Cardassian Empires throws an added layer of complexity to DS9's inter-

imperialist rivalry. Not only do the imperial powers work to advance their own interests, but different fractions of rivals are willing to join forces against perceived common enemies. And in the case of the Cardassians, when a significant chunk of the ruling class breaks away, this can cause a crisis of legitimacy and open the way to rebellion and revolution (*Changing Face of Evil* and *The Dogs of War*). Thus the need to maintain unity of the ruling class in the face of upheaval from below remains constant.

Returning to the Romulans, as the struggle with the Dominion heats up, they seem to be willing to ally with the Federation and the Klingons (*By Inferno's Light*), but quickly withdraw behind their borders and sign a non-aggression pact (*Call to Arms*). The Romulans bide their time as their rivals fight each other in a long bloody war. And even when it is clear that the Dominion is winning, the Romulans keep the bulk of their fleet poised for a conflict with the Federation. Considering the desperate nature of the war, the Federation needs allies so Sisko and Garak produce fake Dominion invasion plans of Romulus. Sisko attempts to convince a pro-Dominion Romulan Senator to join forces with them against the Dominion. At the same time, Senator Vreenak shows the Romulan desire to stay out of the fighting by not backing a losing side:

> VREENAK: You are persistent, Captain, I'll grant you that, but dogged determination isn't enough to change the reality of your situation. Time is definitely not on your side. The Dominion shipyards are working at one hundred percent capacity. Yours are still being rebuilt. The Dominion is breeding legions of Jem'Hadar soldiers every day. You're experiencing a manpower shortage. But most important, the

> Dominion is resolved to win the war at any cost. You and I both know the Federation has already put out peace feelers. Now, in all candor, if you were in my position, which side would you choose?
>
> SISKO: I'd pick the side most likely to leave us in peace when the dust settles. Maybe you're right. Maybe the Dominion will win in the end. Then the Founders will control what we now call Cardassia, the Klingon Empire and the Federation. So, instead of facing three separate opponents with three separate agendas, you'll find yourselves facing the same opponent on every side. There's a word for that. Surrounded. (*In the Pale Moonlight*)

Sisko attempts to convince Vreenak with the fake Dominion invasion plans. When the Senator examines the plans, he discovers they are fake and threatens to expose the Federation's duplicity. However, as it turns out, Garak understood that the plans would not pass muster and assassinates the Senator and frames the Dominion as the culprit. The Federation manipulation works and the Romulans end up at war with the Dominion, which turns the tide enough for the allied powers to soon launch a counter-offensive (*The Tears of the Prophets*).[4]

Despite the new alliance, inter-imperialist tensions remain high between the Federation and the Romulans. The Romulans attempt at one point to gain a strategic position in the Bajoran sector, threatening the joint alliance (*Image in the Sand* and *Shadows and Symbols*), before backing down. At the same time, the Federation realizes that once the dust settles, that the Romulans will be their main rival. And the Federation, through Section 31, is quite willing to manipulate the inner workings of the highest levels of the Romulan government to ensure that

someone is installed who will serve their interests. And it doesn't matter that the person in the crossfire and ousted from power, Senator Cretak was a Romulan patriot who believed in the Federation alliance. Yet as Federation Admiral Ross recognizes, a Romulan patriot, even one who believes in the alliance is not to be trusted since if it is in the best interests of the empire to make a peace, she would pursue that option:

ROSS: No, she wasn't. I told you before, Julian, she's a patriot. Which means if it served the interests of the Romulans to negotiate a separate peace with the Dominion, Cretak would push that option. And believe me, the Dominion would like nothing better than to make a deal with the Romulans right now. (*Inter Arma Enim Silent Leges*)

Admiral Ross, Senator Cretak, Dr. Bashir

Following the Romulans, we bring ourselves to the next major imperial power – the Ferengi Alliance. Unlike all the alien powers considered thus far, the Ferengi were not devoted to territorial conquest, but on trade and commerce. Ferengi government and civilization is built on the ethos of capitalism and profit. Although the Ferengi would despise everything Karl Marx

stood for, they would no doubt agree with his characterization of capitalism as a society built on the pursuit of profit: "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets! “Industry furnishes the material which saving accumulates.” Therefore, save, save, i.e., reconvert the greatest possible portion of surplus-value, or surplus-product into capital!”[5]

In Ferengi society, the commerce is governed according to the Rules of Acquisition, which are described by Quark as follows: “Every Ferengi business transaction is governed by two hundred and eighty five Rules of Acquisition to insure a fair and honest deal for all parties concerned. Well, most of them anyway.” (*The Maquis part one*) And even though the Ferengi government possesses a laissez-faire attitude in regards to many aspects of the economy - notably in regards to worker safety, social benefits, and taxation (*Dogs of War*), like any capitalist state it does ensure that business and trade are done according to agreed upon rules - the Rules of Acquisition. If a Ferengi broke a contract, they were subjected to severe penalties such as the loss of their ability to make profit (*Body Parts*). However, the government is built upon corruption, graft and bribery:

> BRUNT: Hard work, bribes, sucking up to the boss. Just like any other job. (*Family Business*)

However, the Ferengi unlike every great power in DS9 are generally not interested in warfare, although individual Ferengi are engaged in arms dealing (*Business As Usual*), rather they stayed neutral. Making enemies would only lessen business opportunities for the Ferengi. This made the Ferengi available as intermediaries between hostile species (*Starship Down*). For

the Ferengi, war is generally seen as too costly. In an exchange with his nephew Nog, Quark explains the Ferengi approach to acquiring peace:

> QUARK: I'll tell you one thing, nephew. If the Federation had listened to the Ferengi Alliance there never would have been a war.
>
> NOG: Because we would have surrendered a long time ago.
>
> QUARK: No, we would have reached an accommodation. We would have sat across the negotiation table and hammered out a peace treaty. One that both sides could lived with.
>
> NOG: You make it sound so simple.
>
> QUARK: Rule of Acquisition one twenty five. You can't make a deal if you're dead. (*Siege of AR-558*)

As a result of this pragmatic business approach to war and peace, the Ferengi have avoided becoming involved in major interstellar wars. Nor was Ferengi history marked by slavery (with an important exception as we shall see) and genocide, which made Ferengi such as Quark believe that they were superior to humans (*Jem'Hadar*).

Quark

Yet Ferengi society is marked by deeply patriarchal and sexist attitudes with deeply rooted discrimination. Women were not allowed to own property, engage in business, or travel. Women were also not allowed to wear clothing, leave their homes, or even speak and were expected to produce male heirs (*Family Business*). Marriage in Ferengi society is considered little more than a business contract like any other and pregnancy is considered a rental (*Dr. Bashir, I Presume?* and *Nor the Battle to the Strong*). However, some women such as Quark's mother Ishka did engage in secret business transactions and due to her relationship with the leader of the Ferengi, Grand Nagus Zek, she pushed for various reform measures such as allowing women to wear clothing in the hopes that this would lead to even greater status for women in Ferengi society (*Business As Usual*, *Ferengi Love Songs* and *Profit and Lace*). However, Ishka's ambition was not for an overturning of Ferengi society and the installation of a new social system, but equality within it (*Profit and Lace*).

Even though capitalism remained the dominant ideology and practice of the Ferengi, this did not prevent class conflict from erupting. Even though, as Rom said: “Ferengi workers don't want to stop the exploitation. We want to find a way to become the exploiters” (*Bar Association*). However, Ferengi workers were ruthlessly exploited: denied decent wages, health benefits and employers could demand sexual favors from those underneath them. As Rule of Acquisition 211 stated, “Employees are the rungs on the ladder of success. Don't hesitate to step on them.” (*Bar Association*) The idea of a labor “union” was considered a forbidden word by the Ferengi and forming one was subjected to severe sanctions by the government (such as having their accounts frozen). Yet there were instances when exploitation was so crushing, that workers were willing to risk everything to unionize and resist their employers. (*Bar Association*)

As DS9 ends, Ferengi society was undergoing major reforms for the first time in generations – instituting progressive income taxation, retirement benefits, social programs, wage subsidies for the poor, and health care. For Ferengi traditionalists such as Quark, these reforms were seen going against the very nature of capitalism: “Whatever happened to survival of the fittest? Whatever happened to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer? Whatever happened to pure, unadulterated greed?” (*Dogs of War*). Yet the ascension to power of Rom as Grand Nagus (a progressive Ferengi who treats his wife as an equal, union organizer and sympathetic to Federation values) promises that the reforms will continue and Ferengi society, while remaining capitalist, will have a substantial social welfare state.

Jem'Hadar soldier

The final great power to be considered here is the Dominion. The Dominion rules a vast interstellar empire in the Gamma Quadrant, backed up by a massive military force and were technologically superior to most Alpha Quadrant Empires. The Dominion was run by a species of shape shifters (or Changelings) known as the Founders. The Founders were seen as gods or myths by subject races, and their word was considered law. The Founders were once peaceful explorers, but were persecuted by “solids” due to their ability to change form. Yet the Founders saw themselves as superior to other species, since their ability to change form gave them multiple perspectives as opposed to just one. Solids were seen as small insignificant, needing guidance from the Founders, even if this meant breaking their desire for freedom (*Favor of the Bold*). As a result, the Founders established an empire and decided to impose their own form of order. The great powers of the Alpha Quadrant were seen as chaotic threats to the Founders (*Search Part two*). Since the Founders were long lived, they planned for the long haul, often making minor concessions in the short term in order to secure an advantage for the longer term (*Statistical Probabilities*).

While the Founders had the final say in the Dominion, day-to-day affairs were managed by a species known as the Vorta who serve as administrators, troop commanders, scientists and diplomats. The Vorta were genetically-engineered to serve the Founders and worship them (*To the Death, Ties of Blood and Water*, and *Treachery, Faith and the Great River*). The foot soldiers of the Dominion are the Jem'Hadar, who are also genetically-engineered to kill. Like the Vorta, the Jem'Hadar are also programmed to worship the Founders, but this loyalty (like that of the Vorta) was not absolute. So to further ensure the loyalty of the Jem'Hadar, they were addicted to a drug known as ketracel white. If the Jem'Hadar did not receive the drug on a regular basis, they would die (*The Abandoned, Hippocratic Oath, To the Death, Rocks and Shoals*). Even if the Jem'Hadar were betrayed by their superiors, which happened on occasion, they were still ready to die to defend “the order of things”:

> REMATA'KLAN: He does not have to earn my loyalty, Captain. He has had it from the moment I was conceived. I am a Jem'Hadar. He is a Vorta. It is the order of things.
>
> SISKO: Do you really want to give up your life for the order of things?
>
> REMATA'KLAN: It is not my life to give up, Captain. And it never was. (*Rocks and Shoals*)

As mentioned above, the Dominion was founded upon the desire for control and to impose its kind of order on any real or perceived threats. Yet the Dominion method to achieve this control varied considerably. At times, the Dominion was willing to appear benevolent - offering assistance and rebuilding infrastructure (*Call to Arms* and *Rocks and Shoals*). They

welcomed new species into the Dominion, such as the Cardassians provided they obeyed the Founders (*By Inferno's Light*). However, should any species get out of line or rebel, they could expect punishment such as military intervention by Jem'Hadar, being inflicted by a deadly plague or even being exterminated (*The Quickening* and *What They Leave Behind*). In order to prevent rebellion, the Dominion was even willing to wipe out the population of whole planets such as Earth (*Sacrifice of Angels*).

While the Dominion was quite willing to engage in warfare, during initial contacts with alien species, they used espionage, sowed discord and used divide and conquer tactics. For instance, the ability of the Founders to change form made them perfect spies who were able to infiltrate high levels of government, replace key figures such as Martok and instigate trouble. For instance, the mere threat of Dominion spies on Earth caused a near panic and practically led to a military coup by Star Fleet even though only four changelings were on the planet (*Homefront* and *Paradise Lost*). When the Obsidian Order and the Tal Shiar planned to wipe out the Founders, the Dominion sent in a spy to ensure that the two forces joined together so they could be wiped out since both were considered ruthlessly efficient organizations (*Die is Cast*). The Dominion use of the Martok infiltrator ensured that the Federation and the Klingons fought each other, rather than the Dominion.

What all the imperial powers of DS9 have in common is that none of them, even those who are allied with the Federation are not romanticized. All of them are very much imperialist powers, and whatever their rhetoric and differing governmental systems are searching for spheres of influence, power, resources, and are willing to enter into alliances with other powers. Yet none

of the powers is at all interested in liberation of subject peoples, but to ensure the interests of their rulers by imposing their own order.

And this is very much the case with any system of inter-imperialist rivalry. Take the example of the capitalist world in 1914 which possessed powers such as the constitutional monarchy of Britain, republican France, the autocracies of Germany and Russia, and democratic USA. All of these were seemingly different methods of bourgeois rule don't change the essence that these were capitalist societies built upon the pursuit of profit, the exploitation of worker, and the establishment of vast and brutal colonial empires.

Even the development of fascism and Nazism following World War one which brought engineered the genocide of the Jews in the Holocaust in Europe was refining previous practices of the colonial powers in Africa and Asia. As W.E.B. Dubois said, "There was no Nazi atrocity - concentration camps, wholescale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of childhood - which the Christian civilization of Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world."[6] Or to use an old Maoist phrase, when discussing whether the imperialist Churchill was better than the Nazi Hitler, it depends on where you say it: "*If you think* that *Hitler* is *worse than Churchill,* you had *better* say that in Belgium not in India."

What DS9 gives us is a picture of inter-imperialist rivalry where there are no clear-cut good guys, but different great powers pursuing their own interests. And when the series ends with Federation victory in the Dominion war, it appears that it is simply the establishment of a new imperialist alliance in preparation for another war. However, the reader may legitimately ask: where does the liberation of the masses and revolution fit in? What about the role of the

Federation? It is to the latter subject which we now turn.

III. Saints in Paradise: The Federation

In all Star Trek series, the United Federation of Planets is portrayed as a peaceful union of planets from a number of different species who enjoy equal rights and protections under a democratic government. There is no poverty, war, crime in the Federation and all citizens are granted equal rights and live without fear of want - in this and so many respects, the Federation seems to epitomize the ideal of a utopian communist society.

The Federation, as embodied by the characters, is seen as overcoming many of the worst injustices of human society such as racism and class inequality. For instance, racism does not exist in the Federation, even if memories of its evil remain among those like Sisko who come from an African-American background. The legacy of racism and white supremacy is confronted by Sisko during a dream/vision in the award-winning episode *Far Beyond the Stars*. The episode begins with Sisko learning that another Federation captain, who was a close friend, died in a skirmish with the Dominion. The news leaves Sisko distraught, wondering if he is achieving any lasting victories at all and considering stepping down from Star Fleet. Suddenly, Sisko starts having visions/hallucinations that he is an African-American science fiction writer named Benny

Russell living in the 1950s United States at the height of McCarthyism and filled with racist prejudice.

Benny works at a science fiction magazine called the *Galaxy* and writes a story about Deep Space Nine with a black captain, Benjamin Sisko. While the other members of the magazine staff really love the story, the editor refuses to publish it. According to him:

> PABST: Oh, I like it all right. It's good. It's very good. But you know I can't print it.
>
> BENNY: Why not?
>
> PABST: Oh, come on, Benny. Your hero's a Negro captain. The head of a space station, for Christ's sake.
>
> BENNY: What's wrong with that?
>
> PABST: People won't accept it. It's not believable. (*Far Beyond the Stars*)

Benny is told to make the Captain white, but he refuses and goes on and writes six more stories set in the world of Deep Space Nine with Benjamin Sisko. Although the editor is angry, he agrees to publish one of the stories of Benjamin Sisko, provided that it is all made out to be a dream, which Benny agrees to. Although excited at the prospect of his story being published, Benny is confronted with tragedy when a black friend named Jimmy is killed by police (he was suspected of breaking into a car). Benny is distraught and tries to reach the body, but is savagely beaten by two police officers (who had harassed him earlier). After several weeks of recovery, Benny returns to work, only to find out that his story is not going to be published and he is being

fired. Benny breaks down at the news and refuses to remain calm:

> BENNY: No. I'm tired of being calm. Calm never gotten me a damn thing.
>
> PABST: I'm warning you, Benny. If you don't stop this I'm going to call the police.
>
> BENNY: You go ahead! Call them! Call anybody you want. They can't do anything to me. Not anymore. And nor can any of you. I am a human being, damn it. You can deny me all you want but you cannot deny Ben Sisko. He exists! That future, that space station, all those people, they exist in here. In my mind, I created it. And every one of you know it. You read it. It's here. You hear what I'm telling you? You can pulp a story but you cannot destroy an idea. Don't you understand? That's ancient knowledge. You cannot destroy an idea. That future, I created it, and it's real. Don't you understand? It is real! I created it and it's real! It's real! Oh, God. (*Far Beyond the Stars*)

The episode ends with Sisko waking up in the present. After having gone through the dream, Sisko no longer wants to give up but to continue the struggle until the end. Sisko wonders to his father about whether this is the real world or whether this is a vision created by Benny Russell. The episode ends with Sisko looking at the wonder and seeing a reflection of himself as Benny Russell.

Sisko sees the reflection of Benny Russell

Although the episode leaves it an open question about whether the world of DS9 is all the dream of Benny Russell, the thought that a better communist future of equality is also a rejection of the United States with its anticommunism, racism, white supremacy, and police brutality. The character of Benny Russell can also be seen having communist leanings with a book by pro-communist African-American poet Langston Hughes at his desk.

Another evil which the Federation has overcome is that of class divided societies such as capitalism. At one point, several of the characters travel back in time to the early 21st century America when homeless and jobless people were placed in concentration camps known as Sanctuary Districts. Dr. Bashir can't believe that any society would treat its people in such a way:

BASHIR: I assume this is one of those mistakes.

SISKO: A bad one. By the early twenty twenties there was a place like this in every major city in the United States.

BASHIR: Why are these people in here? Are they criminals?

SISKO: No. People with criminal records weren't allowed in the Sanctuary Districts.

BASHIR: Then what did they do to deserve this?

SISKO: Nothing. They're just people without jobs or places to live.

BASHIR: So they get put in here?

SISKO: Welcome to the twenty first century, Doctor. (*Past Tense part one*)

While in the 21st century, the characters have to make sure that a civil disturbance known as the “Bell Riots” occur, when mistreated residents of the Sanctuary Districts revolt – which causes the United States to confront major social problems. As the episode makes clear, without the Bell Riots, there would have been no Federation. It was the eruption of violent class conflict that made a society which had given up on solving the inequities of capitalism, finally decide to change things:

SISKO: It's not that they don't give a damn, Doctor. It's that they've given up. The social problems they face seem too enormous to deal with.

BASHIR: That only makes things worse. Causing people to suffer because you hate them is terrible, but causing people to suffer because you have forgotten how to care? That's really hard to understand.

SISKO: They'll remember. It'll take some time and it won't be easy, but eventually people in this century will remember how to care. (*Past Tense part one*)

And this utopian view of the Federation is carried over to a large degree to DS9. However, there is a particular caveat in DS9, while the Federation has achieved a society of equality that is at called by some of the characters “paradise,” this does not mean that it is

without problems. As Sisko remarks:

> SISKO: Just because a group of people belongs to the Federation it does not mean that they are saints.
>
> KIRA: Excuse me?
>
> SISKO: Do you know what the trouble is?
>
> KIRA: No.
>
> SISKO: The trouble is Earth.
>
> KIRA: Really?
>
> SISKO: On Earth there is no poverty, no crime, no war. You look out the window of Starfleet headquarters and you see paradise. Well, it's easy to be a saint in paradise, but the Maquis do not live in paradise. Out there in the Demilitarised zone, all the problems haven't been solved yet. Out there, there are no saints, just people. Angry, scared, determined people who are going to do whatever it takes to survive whether it meets with Federation approval or not. (*The Maquis part two*)

And it is here we see that paradise doesn't mean all the problems have been solved. In fact, as DS9 shows, the major problem for the Federation is what are you willing to do in order to defend paradise? There end up being two ways for the Federation to defend paradise. One: to make concessions and to prize peace and diplomacy above conflict, even if the opposing party is not interested in a peaceful settlement. On the other hand, there are are Starfleet officers who are

willing to violate the ideals of the Federation in order to defend it under the justification that the "ends justify the means."

The former option can be seen most clearly in how the Federation deals with the Cardassians. Throughout the early seasons of DS9, the Federation is engaged in a peace treaty negotiations with the Cardassians to end a long border conflict. When the treaty establishes the new border and a Demilitarized Zone, the Federation ends up ceding a number of colonies to the Cardassians. The colonists and a number of dissatisfied Star Fleet officers refuse to live under Cardassian control and organize their own resistance organization known as the Maquis. When the Maquis begin to bomb Cardassian tactics and stockpile weapons, Star Fleet fears that the unrest will lead to a wider conflict:

> O'BRIEN: I don't care how much the Cardassians care about the treaty. If the Maquis launch an assault against a civilian target, the Central Command will have to respond.
>
> SISKO: We could wind up with a full scale war on our hands. We have to stop the Maquis. (*Maquis part two*)

In order to maintain the peace treaty, the Federation is willing to collaborate with the Cardassians to hunt down and arrest the Maquis (*The Defiant*). This breeds resentment among Maquis supporters in the Federation who believe that they are being persecuted by a government that values abstract peace and conformity without grasping the complexity of real world

problems. Star fleet officer Michael Eddington, who joins the Maquis expresses their criticism of the Federation as follows:

> Why is the Federation so obsessed about the Maquis? We've never harmed you, and yet we're constantly arrested and charged with terrorism. Starships chase us through the Badlands and our supporters are harassed and ridiculed. Why? Because we've left the Federation, and that's the one thing you can't accept. Nobody leaves paradise. Everyone should want to be in the Federation. Hell, you even want the Cardassians to join. You're only sending them replicators because one day they can take their rightful place on the Federation Council. You know, in some ways you're worse than the Borg. At least they tell you about their plans for assimilation. You're more insidious. You assimilate people and they don't even know it. (*For the Cause*)

Michael Eddington: ex-Starfleet officer and Maquis leader

Even when Cardassia is weakened by the Klingon invasion, Starfleet still values maintaining the status quo and is determined to root out the Maquis. This leads to outright clashes between the Federation and the Maquis as the latter attack the starship *Malinche* during a campaign to drive the Cardassians out of the Demilitarized Zone and in turn Captain Sisko responds by poisoning a Maquis planet and plans to wipe out every one of their colonies. As

Sisko justifies his ruthless action as follows:

> SISKO: I've only just begun. I'm going to eliminate every Maquis colony in the DMZ.
>
> EDDINGTON: You're talking about turning hundreds of thousands of people into homeless refugees.
>
> SISKO: That's right. When you attacked the Malinche you proved one thing, that the Maquis have become an intolerable threat to the security of the Federation, and I am going intend to eliminate that threat. (*For the Uniform*)

Ultimately, Sisko's action causes the Maquis attacks to end and Michael Eddington surrenders himself to the Federation. And we see here, that in seeking to maintain peace and the status quo, that the Federation ended up unleashing violence from those who refused to accept a settlement – to which they responded with heavy-handed military action. In a certain sense, the Federation mimics the actions of other great powers who clamp down on dissenters.

As opposed to the path of peace and diplomacy, there is a different one of using any means available to defend the Federation. When Star Fleet learns that Changelings have infiltrated the Federation, a group of officers under Admiral Leyton propose sweeping security measures to protect Earth, which are rejected by the Federation President as extreme. Later, after the Changelings bomb a diplomatic conference on Earth, Leyton believes that the Changelings posed a much greater threat than the President was able to deal with. Leyton and his comrades wind up faking evidence of an eminent Dominion invasion, sabotaging the power grid of Earth and fortifying the planet. His ultimate goal was to overthrow the President and establish a

military government. Leyton justifies his action to Sisko as follows:

> SISKO: I assume you'll be explaining to the public why it's necessary for Starfleet to seize control of Earth.
>
> LEYTON: Temporarily, of course. Until the changeling threat has been neutralised.
>
> SISKO: And how long will that be? Months? Years? Decades?
>
> LEYTON: However long it takes. The people deserve strong leadership. Someone who can protect them. (*Paradise Lost*)

Although Sisko ends up thwarting Leyton's plans, claiming that he doesn't want to destroy paradise in order to save it, things change during the Dominion War. The war lasts for more than two years, costing the lives of millions and brings the Federation near to defeat. Sisko is convinced that if he can bring the Romulans into the war, that it can turn the tide. Sisko originally plans to steal Dominion invasion plans of Romulus from Cardassia to convince the Romulans. However, once that proves impossible, Sisko decides to forge the plans. To carry out this plan, he works with the ex-Cardassian spy Elim Garak to bribe officials, break numerous laws, and become an accomplice in murder. As we have discussed above, Sisko's plan is successful. What concerns us here is his rationale for the actions which are given below:

> SISKO: That was my first moment of real doubt, when I started to wonder if this whole thing was a mistake. So then I went back to my office and there was a new casualty list waiting for me. People are dying out there every day. Entire worlds

> are struggling for their freedom and here I am still worrying about the finer points of morality. No, I had to keep my eye on the ball. Win the war, stop the bloodshed. Those were the priorities! (*In the Pale Moonlight*)

For Sisko, the immense death toll from the war, the sacrifices of soldiers on the front and the overwhelming threat to the Federation from the Dominion dictated his actions. Being worried about the finer points of morality would only get in the way of what needed to be done. Sisko is able to justify all these compromises to himself, but when he discovers that Senator Vreenak was killed, he realizes that Garak was responsible. When Sisko confronts him, Garak says that the assassination was necessary since it will bring the Romulans into the war:

That's why you came to me, isn't it, Captain? Because you knew I could do those things that you weren't capable of doing. Well, it worked. And you'll get what you want, a war between the Romulans and the Dominion. And if your conscience is bothering you, you should soothe it with the knowledge that you may have just saved the entire Alpha Quadrant and all it cost was the life of one Romulan senator, one criminal, and the self-respect of one Starfleet officer. I don't know about you, but I'd call that a bargain. (*In the Pale Moonlight*)

Garak and Sisko plot to bring the Romulans into the war

Sisko winds up accepting Garak's reasoning, declaring that a guilty conscience is a small price to pay to win a war.

Leyton and Sisko are not alone in violating the principles of the Federation in order to protect it. To paraphrase Garak, there need to be people capable of doing the dirty and necessary work which good upstanding citizens of the Federation won't bring themselves to do. It turns out, a covert organization named Section 31 was created at the foundation of the Federation to protect that paradise. However, the rules and civilized behavior which characterizes the Federation is a hindrance to doing what is necessary:

> BASHIR: But that was two hundred years ago. Are you telling me you've been working on your own ever since? Without specific orders? Accountable to nobody but yourselves?
>
> SLOAN: You make it sound so ominous.

BASHIR: Isn't it? Because if what you say to me is true, you function as judge, jury and executioner, and I think that's too much power for anyone.

SLOAN: I admit it takes exceptional people to do what we do. People who can sublimate their own ambitions to the best interests of the Federation. (*Inquisition*)

When Dr. Bashir is recruited by Section 31, he turns them down and is dumbfounded that an organization like them can exist. Yet as Odo is not, since it is an activity done by every other great power:

BASHIR: I can't believe the Federation condones this kind of activity.

ODO: Personally, I find it hard to believe they wouldn't. Every other great power has a unit like Section thirty one. The Romulans have the Tal Shiar, the Cardassians had the Obsidian Order. (*Inquisition*)

Agents of Section 31

As we discussed above, Section 31 is willing to manipulate internal Romulan affairs, discrediting an and possibly condemning an innocent person, in order to place an agent at the highest levels of government (*Inter Arma Enim Silent Leges*). All of that is mild compared to the depths that Section 31 is willing to go in order to defeat the Dominion as the war drags on. They engineer a deadly virus to kill the Founder, using Odo as carrier to pass it onto his people, and infecting them (*When It Rains...*). When Bashir finds out, he is determined to expose Section 31 and gain a cure for a dying Odo. He is able to discover a cure from an agent of Section 31, Luther Sloan which he uses to heal Odo.

Although this means that the Federation now has a cure to the disease killing the Founders, they decide not to give it to them. Although Sisko doesn't approve of what Section 31 did, he does not want to give them a cure and prevent genocide:

> SISKO: I don't condone what Section Thirty One did, but the Founders started this war, not us. Giving them the cure would strengthen their hand. We can't do that. Not when there are still millions of men and women out there putting their lives on the line every day.
>
> ODO: Well, I can see there's no point protesting. The decision's been made.
>
> SISKO: Odo, I wish I didn't have to say this, but I need to know you're not going to take matters into your own hands.
>
> ODO: You have my word.
>
> SISKO: That's all I needed to hear.

However, Odo follows up by succinctly sums up the arrangement between the Federation and Section 31:

> ODO: Interesting, isn't it? The Federation claims to abhor Section Thirty One's tactics, but when they need the dirty work done, they look the other way. It's a tidy little arrangement, wouldn't you say? (*Dogs of War*)

As the title of one episode says, “In time of war, the law falls silent.” And as the founders of Star Fleet and the Federation recognized, they have always been at war. As we discussed in the previous section, there are a multitude of great imperialist powers, each one striving for hegemony, resources, and spheres of influence. To them, the law has to fall silent in order to protect the utopian paradise of the Federation. Thus in order to protect its way of life from ever-ominous threats, the Federation (and Section 31) has to constantly mimic those same threats in how it combats them.

Although the analogy should not be taken too far, we can extend it to a certain degree in how 20th century socialist states dealt with existing in a hostile capitalist world. From the first emergence of socialism in the USSR, every socialist state faced clear and present danger from imperialist states who wanted to overthrow them (ex. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, the Hitler-Chamberlain Pact at Munich and Operation Barbarossa). The socialist states of the last century thus had to organize themselves for defense against these threats. That meant building up powerful armies, developing security forces and counterinsurgency programs. At times, it could be argued that those security forces grew too powerful in their search for enemies and purges (such as those in the USSR) threatened to undermine those societies. None of that changes that

socialism since its birth was staring down imperialist guns and that there was no silver medal for finishing second, only the return of victorious reaction.

The dilemma of the Federation in DS9 “how to defend paradise” is not easily answered. Nor does the series answer the question, rather it simply asks the question. While one can be repelled at the morality of Sisko's involvement in killing Vreenak and tricking the Romulans into the war – we should not forget that the tactic succeeded and probably wound up turning the tides. And for the Marxist watching DS9, we should not be repelled by how the Federation is displayed making tough choices about how to defend itself. Rather, those questions are inherent in the very nature of the revolutionary process as we fight counterrevolution, dispossessed classes, and external imperialism. As Gramsci once said, “whoever wills the end, must will the ends.”[7] And while it can be argued that the Federation winds up as just another great power (in many respects that seems true), it can be argued that the Federation would not have survived without some of those questionable actions. We can see the perils, both in DS9 and in real life, between how far to go and crossing the line, but the show does not offer us timeless moralizing principles like other Star Trek shows, rather it shows us how it is hard to be a saint when all the problems haven't been solved.

IV. The Colonizer and the Colonized: Bajor and Cardassia

a. Bajor

Thus far, the 24th century future of DS9 seems to be one that Marxists would have difficulty feeling optimistic about: there is still inter-imperialist rivalry and even the communistic Federation has to act like other great powers in order to survive. What room is there for revolution and intervention by the masses? DS9 confronts these questions in the

colonizer/colonized dialectic that exists between the Cardassians and the Bajorans. The brutal Cardassian occupation of Bajor not only serves to underline the horrors and injustices of colonialism and imperialism that are practiced by the great powers in the Star Trek universe, but the struggle of the Bajorans serves as an allegory for anti-colonial struggles in our world (ex. Jews suffering under Nazism, Palestinians, Irish, Algerians, Vietnamese, etc.). And in the Bajoran struggle for national liberation, we can see some of the challenges of attempting to chart an independent course in a universe dominated by imperialist powers. However, DS9 shows us genuine possibility for revolution when the Cardassians eventually rise up in revolution against the Dominion.

Approximately fifty years before the beginning of DS9, the Cardassian Empire began their occupation of Bajor. Prior to contact with the Cardassians, the Bajorans were a peaceful agricultural people. Initially, the Cardassians, who sought to extract the resources of Bajor for their growing empire, appeared benevolent, but they soon established a military presence and forcibly annexed the planet without resistance. (*Emissary, Duet, Waltz*) Over the coming decades, the Cardassians instituted slavery, strip-mining, and labor camps. The Cardassians also saw themselves as superior and Bajorans were treated as inferiors by the colonizers and lived in segregated housing and worked in dangerous jobs such as mining. (*Necessary Evil, Things Past, Waltz*) Bajoran women were used as “comfort women” by Cardassian soldiers, and were perceived as collaborators by other Bajorans (*Wrongs Darker Than Death or Night*). The Cardassians established their own collaborationist government of Bajorans and comprador bourgeoisie who got rich from the Occupation (*Necessary Evil* and the *Collaborator*). By the time the Cardassians were forced to withdraw, 10 million died and Bajor was devastated.

Bajoran Resistance Fighters

Very quickly, the Bajoran people began to resist the occupation forming a variety of underground guerrilla organizations to fight back. And the writers of DS9 recognized the truth of anti-colonial resistance which Frantz Fanon observed many years ago: “National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.”[8] However, anti-colonial violence is not senseless, but is a process that“ is the veritable creation of new men.... If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: "The last shall be first and the first last." Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence. That is why, if we try to describe it, all decolonization is successful.”[9]

Whereas the Cardassians believed that they were racially superior and that Bajorans were primitive and backward, the Bajorans proved extremely willing to shed old ideas and customs to fight the colonizer. Before the Occupation, Bajor was governed by a strict caste system known as the D'jarras, but this was abandoned so that all Bajorans could become soldiers. (*Ascension*) The

Bajoran resistance operated in small decentralized cells of ten to twenty people and used a variety of tactics such as sabotaging Cardassian factories, ambushing soldiers, killing collaborators, and even attempting to kill the Cardassian prefect Gul Dukat (*Duet, Necessary Evil, Things Past, Wrongs Darker Than Death or Night, Tacking into the Wind*). Most of their tactics were based surprise, hit-and-run, random violence. Bajoran resistance fighters such as Kira Nerys justified her use of terrorism as follows:

> MARRITZA: Oh, I think you did. And I'm sure your total wasn't limited to military personnel. After all, the most effective terrorist weapon was random violence. Don't leave now, Major, it's just getting good. How many Cardassian civilians did you kill?
>
> KIRA: Look, I regret a lot of what I had to do.
>
> MARRITZA: How convenient of you.
>
> KIRA: We had no choice! We were fighting for survival!(*Duet*)

Just a filing clerk?

As the war continued, it made the Cardassian occupation increasingly difficult. The Cardassian government wanted the planet for full scale colonization, but the attacks by the resistance made this impossible. So Prefect Gul Dukat attempted to rule with a softer hand, reducing labor camp quotas, improving rations and improving medical care. However, the Bajorans responded by attacking Cardassian installations, leading to bloody reprisals (*Waltz*). Even though the Cardassians, particularly Dukat, were willing to use a "gentler hand" at times, the Bajorans refused to accept their subordinate status to the colonizers. Dukat ended up blaming the Bajorans for the millions who perished during the occupation, stating the Bajorans had squandered a great opportunity:

> SISKO: So, why do you think they didn't appreciate this rare opportunity you were offering them?
>
> DUKAT: Because they were blind, ignorant fools. If only they had cooperated with us, we could have turned their world into a paradise. From the moment we arrived on Bajor, it was clear that we were the superior race. But they couldn't accept that. They wanted to be treated as equals when they most certainly were not. Militarily, technologically, culturally, we were almost a century ahead of them in every way. We did not choose to be the superior race. Fate handed us our role. And it would've been so much easier on everyone if the Bajorans had simply accepted their role. But no, day after day they clustered in their temples and prayed for deliverance, and night after night they planted bombs outside of our homes. Pride. Stubborn, unyielding pride. From the servant girl that cleaned my quarters to the

> condemned man toiling in a labour camp to the terrorist skulking through the hills of Dahkur Province. They all wore their pride like some twisted badge of honour. (*Waltz*)

Gul Dukat

However, colonizers throughout history whether the British, French, German, USA, Japanese, etc have always justified their colonial occupations as being driven by superior values which ultimately benefit the colonized – while speaking of bringing civilization to the "backward natives." The Cardassians behave no different than any other colonizer throughout history – justifying their massacres with pleasant paeans to humanistic values. Fanon observed that during decolonization is mockery by the oppressed of the values used to subjugate them: “In the period of decolonization, the colonized masses mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up.”[10]

And the constant Cardassian repression does not stop the Bajoran resistance, but merely magnifies it:

> ***"The repressions, far from calling a halt to the forward rush of national consciousness, urge it on. Mass slaughter in the colonies at a certain stage of the embryonic development of consciousness increases that consciousness, for the hecatombs are an indication that between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force."***[11]

Ultimately, the situation on Bajor becomes untenable for the Cardassians as the resistance becomes bolder and the Federation places pressure on them to withdraw.

However, the Cardassian withdrawal does not lead to a new society, but to chaos as a new Provisional Government was established and the newly independent nation sought to heal the wounds of colonialism. The planet applied for membership to the Federation and asked for help in rebuilding their world. Many Bajorans such as Kira Nerys thought that her people were simply exchanging one occupying power for another. (*The Emissary*) Newly independent Bajor also had to deal with the discovery of the Wormhole which made it a strategic point in the galaxy, coveted by all the great powers including the Cardassians.

The Provisional Government maintained a pro-Federation standpoint and many former members of the Resistance were incorporated into the ranks of the newly-formed Bajoran Militia (*The Shakaar*). Many of these ex-Resistance dreamed of simple lives as farmers and a progressive government which would look after their interests (*The Homecoming*, *The Shakaar*). Yet the Provisional Government was also believed by many to be filled with opportunists and infighting (*The Homecoming*). At the same time, there were still violent resistance factions which refused to lay down their arms, religious figures such as Kai Winn who urged a return to

orthodox values, and xenophobic reactionaries of the Alliance for Global Unity who wanted to purge the planet of all alien influence (*Past Prologue, The Circle* and *The Siege*). At the same time, many different factions of the new Bajoran ruling class hoped for the planet to modernize and begin trading for export in order to increase Bajoran prestige, even at the cost of the people (*Shakaar*).

The lack of a clear political course and the unleashing of divergent political forces following the end of the Occupation should not be a surprise. Nearly all formerly colonized states face struggles determining what path they are to follow, as Fanon said: “It is true to say that independence has brought moral compensation to colonized peoples, and has established their dignity. But they have not yet had time to elaborate a society, or to build up and affirm values.”[12]

Bajor faces several major crises following the end of the Occupation, two of which we will discuss here. After a year, the Provisional Government is breaking down and losing legitimacy. Orthodox religious leaders deplore the lack of traditional values. At the same time, the Alliance for Global Unity “The Circle” wants to expel all non-Bajorans from the planet. The Circle, heavily-armed stages a coup and has the Federation withdraw from the planet. However, the Federation and progressive ex-members of the Resistance such as Kira Nerys and Li Nalaas discover that the Circle's arms come from the Cardassians. If the Circle's coup is successful, this will mean that Bajor and the Wormhole will no longer be protected by the Federation, but will open the road for the Cardassians to return. The coup is thwarted when proof of Cardassian support to the Circle is exposed and the Federation returns. (*Homecoming, The Circle, The Siege*)

In the third season, Bajoran First Minister Winn (who is also the leader of the Bajoran faith) has Kira being sent to retrieve valuable farm equipment from the leader of her resistance cell, Shakaar. The farm equipment removes poison from the soil (done by the Cardassians). Winn hopes to use the farm equipment to be used to restore a formerly productive agricultural region, and that those crops can then be used for export, increasing Bajoran commerce and enhance Bajor's application to join the Federation. Kira agrees to the assignment and attempts to convince Shakaar, but he refuses to return the equipment. Shakaar explains that it took him and other ex-Resistance fighters a year to gain a hold of the equipment and that they were supposed to have them for a year. When Kira tells Shakaar to think of the greater good, he responds as follows:

> KIRA: The Rakantha project is important. If they can get it underway, Bajor could start exporting goods again. It could start to change the way the rest of the galaxy looks at us. They'll stop seeing us as poor refugees and start seeing us as equals.
>
> SHAKAAR: I don't give a damn how the rest of the galaxy looks at us. We're trying to feed our own people here and you're talking about exports. (*Shakaar*)

Ultimately, government troops are sent to arrest Shakaar and other farmers. Kira joins with Shakaar and other ex-Resistance fighters and they begin running from the Militia. In response, other civil disturbances have erupted across the planet and Winn has declared martial law and suspended local government. Shakaar, Kira and the others eventually grow tired of running and plan to ambush the soldiers pursuing them. However, the farmers and the soldiers (led by an ex-Resistance fighter) refuse to fight one another, but want to do something to prevent

a future outbreak of civil war. Shakaar, Kira and the militia confront Winn, telling her that Shakaar will be running in the upcoming election (with the support of the military) and that Winn has to step down otherwise the whole incident will be made public. Winn agrees and Shakaar winds up winning the election.

The whole struggle on Bajor against both the Circle and Winn is ultimately a rejection of reactionary nationalism and a national bourgeois more interested in mimicking other ruling classes than creating a new society. In other words, Deep Space 9 agrees with Fanon that "Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a program. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness."[13] For Bajor, nationalism in of itself is seen as a dead end which can serve either reactionaries or so-called progressive sections of the national bourgeois at the expense of the masses. While Resistance fighters, such as Shakaar (a farmer) and Kira (a refugee) do not discard their nationalism, they want a Bajor which looks after its people. Like Fanon, they insist that national consciousness must give way to social consciousness which eliminates the inheritance of colonialism as opposed to perpetuating them: "The battle line against hunger, against ignorance, against poverty, and against unawareness ought to be ever present in the muscles and the intelligences of men and women."[14]

b. The Cardassians

The Cardassians begin *DS9* as ruthless colonizers, but by the end of it there is a drastic change as they rise up in revolution. And it is this change in the Cardassians, an oppressing group which shows some of the most overt revolutionary and communist themes of *DS9*. As

opposed to other science fiction shows which display alien species as either “good” or “bad,” the Cardassians are marked by contradictions and in the end, embrace a revolutionary message.

Cardassia Prime

Throughout the series, Cardassians in general are shown as blind to and unwilling to confront the atrocities of the Bajoran occupation. We can see this most clearly in the character of Gul Dukat, the former prefect of Bajor. Dukat believes that the Occupation was justified. He believes that the Occupation ultimately benefited Bajor, saying to Kira:

> DUKAT: I know you find this to accept, but I believe that in some ways the Occupation actually helped Bajor.
>
> KIRA: Which part? The massacres or the strip mining?
>
> DUKAT: I have no desire to debate the merits of the Occupation with you. I'm even willing to admit that perhaps we were a little harsh in our methods. But the fact is, the Bajoran people are stronger now than they have been in centuries. When we arrived, you were a weak, contemplative race, choking on your isolation. And

> now you have a new confidence, a whole new sense of purpose, not to mention a key role in the future of this entire quadrant. (*Indiscretion*)

Although Dukat is not blind to the atrocities which occurred (and he believes that they were provoked by the Bajoran Resistance), rather he believes that if the Bajorans had cooperated with the "superior" Cardassians, they could have made the world a paradise (*Waltz*). Dukat sees himself as a kind father to the Bajorans who is trying to care for his wayward and disobedient children:

> DUKAT: Yes, of course. The Bajorans are, well, they're like my children, I suppose. And like any father, I want only what's best for them.
>
> DAX: And you still feel like that now after some of your children have tried to kill you
>
> DUKAT: Bad manners are the fault of the parent, not the child. My weakness is I'm too generous, too forgiving. My heart is too big. (*Things Past*)

Dukat believed that he was being gentle with the Bajorans when compared to the harsh measures which were desired by the Cardassian government (*Waltz*). He considered it one of his biggest regrets that the Bajorans did not recognize him as their liberator who protected him in so many ways (*Sacrifice of Angels*). As Dukat admitted though, he actually hated the Bajorans and desired to kill them all.

The patronizing racism of Dukat, his inability to understand why the Bajorans want freedom as opposed to accepting his guidance, and his desire to exterminate them embodies colonialism and imperialism at its worst. Whether in Britain, France, Germany, USA, Japan, etc

all imperialist powers have justified themselves as being the bearers of a superior civilization, carrying the “white man's burden” or the “civilizing mission.” Although these empires desire resources, hegemony or spheres of influence, to their apologists they also deserve to rule because they are racially superior. And the Cardassians, like any true imperialists, cannot understand why anyone would reject their benevolent rule. Imperialist powers wind up developing elaborate rationalizations for their massacres and exploitation. They also study the colonized in order to discern what is it about their racial “essence” which makes them rebel. The Cardassians, like other empires, cannot accept that the colonized desires freedom and national liberation. However, not all Cardassians accept the view of Dukat that the occupation was justified and benevolent. In a season one episode, *Duet*, a Cardassian file-clerk named Aamin Marritza disguises himself as Gul Darhe'el, the leader of a brutal labor camp Gallitep on Bajor. Marritza is arrested by the Federation and the Bajorans. He is placed in prison and not only admits all his atrocities, but boasts about them. When Marritza is discovered to just be a filing clerk, he is released by the Federation, even though he protests that he needs to stand trial:

> MARRITZA: No, don't you see? I have to be punished. We all have to be punished. Major, you have to go out and tell them I'm Gul Darhe'el. It's the only way.
>
> KIRA: Why are you doing this?
>
> MARRITZA: For Cardassia. Cardassia will only survive if it stands in front of Bajor and admits the truth. My trial will force Cardassia to acknowledge its guilt. And we're guilty, all of us. My death is necessary. (*Duet*)

Marritza, who was stationed at the labor camp believes that he was a coward for failing to prevent the atrocities. He wants to be punished, hoping that his testimony will force Cardassia to confront what they did to the Bajorans and change. Major Kira, who originally had Marritza arrested does not believe that he was responsible for what happens.

However, we can see from history that a key part of developing a revolutionary movement is to confront national oppression and colonialism along with class struggle. And societies and revolutionary groups which refuse to take up the struggle against these injustices can never create a consciousness which reacts against all manifestations of cruelty and injustice or build a new society. However, once that consciousness takes hold, even among a former oppressing nationality, it signals that revolution is at hand.

Legate Damar: leader of the Cardassian Resistance Movement

Take the instance of Damar, who by the end of DS9 is probably the most overtly communist character. Damar begins as Dukat's subordinate and apprentice who joined with his mentor to fight the Klingons and restore Cardassian glory. (*Return to Grace, Apocalypse Rising*)

After Cardassia joins the Dominion, Damar makes no secret that he wants to reoccupy Bajor and on a number of occasions displays openly racist views towards Bajorans (*Call to Arms, Favor the Bold*). Eventually, Damar who is a dedicated soldier rises to leader of the Cardassian Empire, yet he is increasingly viewed as a subordinate and inferior by the Dominion. As the war drags on, the Cardassians suffer increasing numbers of casualties and their territory is negotiated away by the Dominion, and his authority melted away. Damar also took to heavy drinking and seemed to fall into a deep depression (*Til Death Do Us Part, Strange Bedfellows*). Cardassia resembles more an occupied territory than an ally of the Dominion. However, a chance encounter with Dukat causes Damar to regain his confidence and he begins plotting a rebellion with traditionalist military officers against the Dominion (*Changing Face of Evil*). Although Damar had hoped for a quick victory, that doesn't happen and his rebel forces have to go into hiding. Yet Damar also recognized that despite the superior might of the Dominion, that the desire for liberation is a source of great strength:

> RUSOT: Can we really hope to defeat the Dominion? With the Breen on their side, they're stronger than ever.
>
> DAMAR: But we will be fighting to win back our homes and our freedom, and that will make us even stronger. (*Changing Face of Evil*)

Damar, unlike many of the rebels, is willing to do what it takes to win. And as the rebellion drags on, there is a definite change in his consciousness. For one, Damar puts aside his feelings towards Bajorans in order to work with Major Kira who is willing to train the rebels in guerrilla

tactics (*When It Rains...*). This means that the rebellion will not be fought using the traditional methods of the Cardassian military, but as a people's war which necessarily relies for its backing from the oppressed masses. To effectively fight a war this way and win, means that the commanders have to be fused with the people and struggling for their liberation. Damar comes to understand that his role is not to recreate the old Cardassia, but to fight for a new society. This is most dramatically emphasized when Damar learns that his innocent wife and son were killed by the Dominion. When Major Kira hears the news, and Damar's disbelief at the casual brutality of the Dominion and how it happens, she reminds Damar that he had killed the innocent and wanted to restore the old Cardassia which had occupied her planet:

> GARAK: One of our listening posts picked up a message. The Dominion has succeeded in locating Damar's family.
>
> DAMAR: They're dead. They weren't a part of this rebellion. The Dominion knew that, the Founder knew that. Weyoun knew that. To kill her and my son. The casual brutality of it. A waste of life. What kind of state tolerates the murder of innocent women and children? What kind of people give those orders?
>
> KIRA: Yeah, Damar, what kind of people give those orders?
>
> (Damar steps forward, then leaves.)
>
> KIRA: Oh, that was stupid.
>
> GARAK: Not at all. Damar has a certain romanticism about the past. He could use a dose of cold water.
>
> KIRA: I could have picked a better time.

> GARAK: If he's the man to lead a new Cardassia, if he's the man we hope him to be, then the pain of this news made him more receptive to what you said, not less. (*Tacking Into the Wind*)

Later, Damar reaches the point of no return, when he kills his friend Rusot who planned to kill Kira and the Federation officers. Rusot had followed Damar not because he wanted a new Cardassia, but to restore the old Empire. Yet Damar understood that was an impossibility. (*Tacking Into the Wind*) When the Dominion wipes out the organized resistance, it seems that the rebellion is crushed, but it is clear to Kira that Damar has become a legend, the embodiment of a dream of liberation and that a civilian uprising is possible (*Dogs of War*). When it is revealed to the populace that Damar is alive, this quickly sparks mass resistance and revolution. The Cardassian working class soon begins sabotaging key facilities, communication centers and power stations. This sparks Dominion reprisals which massacre millions, but rather than ending the rebellion it causes the Cardassian military to switch sides and the resistance to intensify. The Dominion decides to exterminate the Cardassian population in retaliation. In the end, the Cardassians are able to liberate themselves, although at the cost of hundreds of millions of lives including Damar (*What You Leave Behind*).

Although DS9 leaves it an open question of what type of Cardassia will emerge from the rubble of war and genocide, the transformation of Damar (and potentially the rest of Cardassian society) is a clear case of the development of revolutionary communist consciousness. Damar recognizes that his rebellion is about emancipating all of the oppressed and transcending the methods and horrors of the past. He does not want to become like the Dominion, but to become

something else. Even though Damar suffered at the hands of the Dominion, his goal is not revenge – but revolution and ending the rule of oppressors. In the end, the struggle for revolution transformed Damar from not just saying that the oppressors need to be removed from power, but that society needs to be transformed (in terms of power, ideas, and customs).

V. Conclusion

In the end, *Star Trek DS9* was a departure from the utopian vision of Gene Roddenbery to a more realistic look at the real world of imperialism, colonialism, racism, national liberation, and the development of communist consciousness. The show managed to achieve a nuanced and unromantic look at how imperialism function, the dialectic of colonization and resistance, and how communist consciousness can develop.

Footnotes

1. All parenthetical italicized references are to movies or episodes of Star Trek Deep Space Nine.

2. A discussion of how the Federation may qualify as imperialism will be discussed below.

3. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, A Popular Outline* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 119.

4. We will discuss the reasons for the Federation assassinating Vreenak later.

5. Karl Marx, "Capital: Volume One," Marxist Internet Archive. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch24.htm

6. W.E.B. Dubois, *The World and Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 23.

7. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Political Writings 1910-1920* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 68.

8. Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 35.

9. Ibid. 36-7.

10. Ibid. 43.

11. Ibid. 72.

12. Ibid. 81.

13. Ibid. 203.

14. Ibid.